

Historic, archived document

Do not assume content reflects current
scientific knowledge, policies, or practices.

7

4W
1

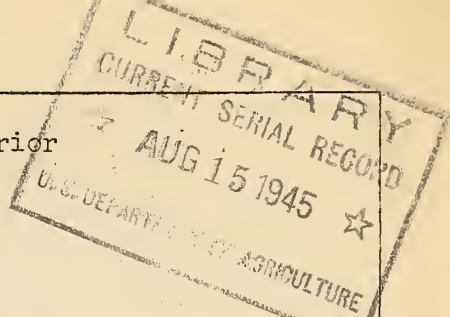
United States Department of the Interior
Fish and Wildlife Service

Wildlife Leaflet 269

Chicago 54, Ill.

*

May 1945



HOW TO CONTROL VAGRANT CATS

Prepared in the Division of Predator and Rodent Control

INTRODUCTION

Pet cats that are well fed and given proper care are a source of pleasure about the home, and generally kill only a few birds. They may aid in controlling mice. The cats, characterized as stray or vagrant, are usually house cats and their offspring that have been driven or allowed to stray away from their original home or have been taken out of a city and abandoned along a country road. This should never be done if the cats are not wanted. These stray cats are forced to gain a precarious living by hunting mice, and preferably birds, in alleys, yards, vacant lots, and fields, or by feeding as scavengers from garbage cans and at city dumps. These cats exist in considerable numbers in cities, towns, and rural communities. Being nocturnal in habit, they are seldom seen and their real abundance is not recognized.

Vagrant cats soon revert to their wild habits and become rapacious, cautious, and solitary. They are a menace to beneficial birds, doing much toward reducing bird populations in a community. In addition, these cats are generally mangy and diseased. They mingle with the valued cats and contaminate them by transmitting disease and parasites and in this way may disseminate disease among human beings.

Because of their destruction of game and insectivorous birds, poultry, cottontail rabbits, and other forms of beneficial wildlife, and because they may become a menace to public health, all unowned cats should be destroyed. Two methods for their control are suggested. The first of these methods rests with the original owner of the cats. No kittens of a pet house cat should be allowed to stray away from the home. If the owner, himself or herself, does not wish to destroy the kittens or the adult cat, they should be given to the City Pound or local Humane Society to dispose of. The other method is to trap them. They can be caught in well constructed and baited traps. These traps can be made at home or purchased on the market.

HOME-MADE TRAP

One kind of wooden-box trap is described that is simple in construction and can easily be made as illustrated in figures 1 and 2. It consists of a box, made

NOTE.--This Leaflet supersedes United States Department of Agriculture Leaflet 50, How to Make a Cat Trap, issued in November 1929--a contribution by the Bureau of Biological Survey.

from 7/8-inch lumber and about 12 inches square by 30 inches long; a false floor or treadle that rests on a fulcrum (a small piece of wood nailed across the floor of the trap); a trigger of 3-gage wire, connected by a loop to a screw eye at one side of the treadle posterior to the fulcrum, extended along the side of the box to the top of the trap and passed through a second screw eye; and a vertically sliding door that is supported, when the trap is set, by the free end of the trigger wire. The door slides in grooves that are kept greased to help it drop rapidly. In the rear end of the trap there is an opening about 3 inches square that is covered on the inside with a heavy wire netting and that is provided with a tightly fitting door on the outside to permit observation of any captive animal and introduction of a fumigant for its disposal. This small door should be left open when the trap is set to provide ventilation but should be closed after a gassing material has been applied.

Fresh or canned fish is probably the best bait and should be placed within the trap at the rear end. Other meat baits may be used. A little dried catnip tied up in a cloth or a few drops of catnip oil similarly placed are excellent attractants and may be employed in place of baits. When the cat enters the trap, its weight on the treadle behind the fulcrum depresses that part of the treadle and pulls back the trigger, thus allowing the door to fall.

When the captive is a vagrant cat or other animal that should be destroyed, an ounce of carbon disulphide, or 2 ounces of chloroform, may be poured upon a wad of cotton batting and inserted into the trap. These will release fumes that will asphyxiate quickly and humanely. After either of these fumigants has been applied, the trap should be kept tightly closed to confine the gas. Carbon disulphide is highly inflammable and explosive, and its fumes are offensive and poisonous if inhaled in a closed place. Do not smoke when using it.

Calcium cyanide in the form of flakes, granules, or dust may be used as a fumigant. Scatter a tablespoonful in the trap and close tightly as described for carbon disulphide. It releases fumes that are deadly but not inflammable. The fumigation should be done in the open air and not in a closed room.

COMMERCIAL LIVE TRAPS

There are several types of commercial live traps on the market that are effective in catching cats. They vary in door and trigger designs. Instructions for setting them are given by the manufacturers of the traps. They may be obtained through local hardware dealers or pet animal stores. These traps should be baited as described for the home-made trap.

After it is determined that the captive cat is not a neighbor's pet, it may be disposed of by placing the wire trap in a tightly closed box and gassing as has been described. Instead of gassing, the animal may be drowned by submerging the trap in water.

PLACEMENT OF TRAPS

Traps should be set at or near places that stray cats might be expected to visit in search of food, such as garbage cans at the rear of residences and food establishments where they are often seen. Along fence rows or among shrubbery where birds are nesting and feeding are also good locations.

FIGURE 1

FRONT AND PART OF THE INTERIOR OF TRAP SET

1. Door up in grooves guiding its fall
2. Treadle board resting on a fulcrum
3. Trigger wire
4. Back wall with 3-inch square opening screened
5. Uprights containing grooves in which door slides

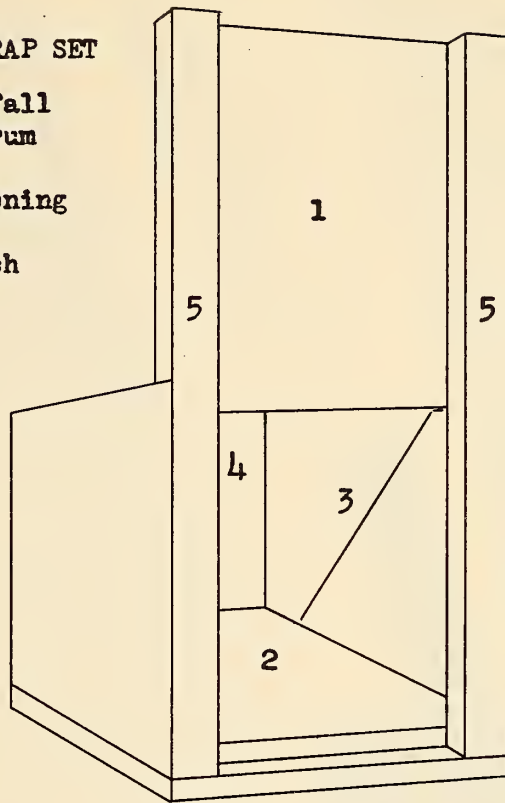


FIGURE 2

SIDE VIEW OF CAT TRAP

1. Fulcrum
2. Treadle board
3. Trigger wire
4. Groove for door
5. End of trigger wire on which door rests when trap is set

